

Message Text

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46

ACTION OC-05

INFO OCT-01 ARA-06 ISO-00 CCO-00 A-01 /013 W

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P R 281630Z MAY 75

FM AMEMBASSY QUITO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5714

INFO AMCONSUL GUAYAQUIL

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FOR A, A/OC, AND ARA

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ACOM, AMGT, EC

SUBJECT: SURFACE POUCHES TO QUITO & GUAYAQUIL

REFS: A) QUITO'S OM, SEPT 13, 1974

B) GUAYAQUIL'S OM, SEPT 19, 1974

C) AMB BREWSTER LETTER TO FENSTERMACHER, OCT 3, 1974

D) GUAYAQUIL 127 (2/10/75)

1. SUMMARY. SURFACE POUCH SERVICE TO GUAYAQUIL AND QUITO, DETERIORATING FOR OVER TWO YEARS, HAS REACHED THE POINT THAT IT IS NO LONGER ACCEPTABLE. WE ARE NOW MISSING MORE THAN 75 (SEVENTY-FIVE) DIPLOMATIC POUCHES. IN ORDER TO FORESTALL FURTHER LOSSES, REQUEST IMMEDIATE RPT IMMEDIATE SUSPENSION OF SURFACE POUCH SHIPMENTS PENDING WASHINGTON REVIEW OF OUR SITUATION AND APPROVAL OF ALTERNATIVE MEANS OF GETTING SURFACE POUCHES TO US. END SUMMARY.

2. FOR MORE THAN TWO YEARS, QUITO AND GUAYAQUIL HAVE BEEN PROTESTING THE DETERIORATING QUALITY AND SECURITY OF SURFACE POUCH SHIPMENTS THROUGH GUAYAQUIL. BAGS ARE ROUTINELY LOST, TAMPERED WITH, BROKEN INTO, PILFERED, AND DAMAGED. THE BASIC PROBLEM IS THAT THE OIL BOOM IN THIS COUNTRY HAS LED TO A VAST SURGE IN IMPORTS WHICH HAVE COMPLETELY OUTSTRIPPED PORT FACILITIES. FOR A DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PROBLEMS IN THE PORT OF GUAYAQUIL, SEE GUAYAQUIL'S LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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237 OF 2/10/75. SHIPS SIT IN THE RIVER FOR UP TO 4 WEEKS

WAITING FOR ONE OF THE 5 BERTHS AT THE PIER. WAREHOUSES ARE FULL AND NOW COMPLETELY OVERRUN BY OFLOADED CARGO,

A CONSIDERABLE QUANTITY OF WHICH SITS OUT IN THE OPEN, UNPROTECTED. CONSULATE OFFICIALS HAVE WALKED THROUGH WAREHOUSES AND STORAGE FACILITIES LOOKING FOR POUCHES, WHICH ARE SIMPLY DUMPED AT RANDOM WHEREVER ROOM CAN BE FOUND; UNDER SACKS OF CEMENT, BEHIND HEAVY MACHINERY, BENEATH CARS, ON TOP OF ROLLS OF NEWSPRINT.

3. THE ECUADOREAN POST OFFICE, NOMINALLY IN CHARGE OF THE MESS, HAS COMPLETELY THROWN UP ITS HANDS. WE HAVE OFFERED (IN OUR OWN INTEREST) TO HELP SORT THE BAGS, SEVERAL THOUSAND OF WHICH ARE NOW BACKED UP. MORE ARE UNLOADED WITH EVERY SHIP. WE ARE MISSING POUCHES DATING BACK TO EARLY JANUARY. ON VARIOUS OCCASIONS WE HAVE MADE THE GOE FOREIGN OFFICE AWARE OF THE PROBLEMS, AND THE CHARGE SENT A LETTER ASKING THE MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS AND COMMUNICATIONS (RESPONSIBLE FOR POSTAL FACILITIES AT THE PORT OF GUAYAQUIL) TO INTERVENE TO EXPEDITE DELIVERY OF DIPLOMATIC BAGS. THE EMBASSY ADMIN OFFICER HAS MET WITH THE DIRECTOR OF NATIONAL MAILS TO SOLICIT HIS SUPPORT WITH THE MINISTER. FIVE DIFFERENT AMERICAN OFFICERS HAVE RESITED THE PORT PERSONALLY IN EFFORTS TO LOCATE POUCHES AND TO BRING ABOUT CHANGES IN PROCEDURES.

4. WE HAVE NO REASON TO BELIEVE THAT THE SITUATION IS LIKELY TO IMPROVE IN THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE. THE GOE HAS, HOWEVER, UNDERTAKEN A LONG-TERM PROGRAM FOR EXPANSION OF PORT FACILITIES WHICH WILL INCLUDE A NEW MAIL HANDLING FACILITY AND HOPEFULLY A SEPARATE AREA WHERE DIPLOMATIC MAIL CAN BE SEGREGATED FOR BOTH SECURITY AND EXPEDITIOUS HANDLING. BUT IMPLEMENTATION OF THIS PROGRAM, INCLUDING COMPLETION OF NEEDED CONSTRUCTION, HASN'T A PRAYER OF COMING TO FRUITION FOR SEVERAL YEARS.

5. IN THE MEANTIME, WE ARE LOSING MORE BAGS THAN WE ARE RECEIVING, MANY OF WHICH MAY NOT BE RECOVERED AT ALL. THIS HAS, NEEDLESS TO SAY, CREATED A SERIOUS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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MORALE PROBLEM AT THESE TWO HARDSHIP POSTS. EVERYONE HERE KNOWS THAT WE HAVE MANY MISSING BAGS, BUT FEW ARE AWARE OF THE ENORMITY OF THE LOSS (75-PLUS BAGS). THESE CONTAIN, AMONG OTHER THINGS, CLOTHES AND OTHER GOODS ORDERED FOR LAST CHRISTMAS (I.E., ORDERED UP TO 9 MONTHS AGO FOR DELIVERY 7 MONTHS AGO), PCIS NEWSPAPERS, BOOKS, MAGAZINES, AS WELL AS OFFICIAL MAIL.

6. WE HAVE HAD REPEATED CORRESPONDENCE WITH THE DEPARTMENT OVER THE LAST TWO YEARS ABOUT A RESUMPTION OF APO SERVICE WHICH WAS TEMPORARILY SUSPENDED WHEN THE MILITARY MISSION WITHDREW THREE YEARS AGO. AN EXPANDED MILITARY PRESENCE IN THE FORM OF A MILITARY LIAISON OFFICE, RETURNED OVER A YEAR AGO, AND WE RECEIVED PERMISSION FROM THE GOE, IN WRITING (ON 12/13/73, REPORTED IN QUITO'S 6587 DECEMBER 19, 1973), TO RESUME THE APO SERVICE WHICH HAD BEEN SUSPENDED. IN FACT, APO SERVICE WAS PROMPTLY RESUMED BY US MILITARY AUTHORITIES, BUT ONLY FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE US MILITARY HERE (APO NEW YORK 09897) DROPPED AT HOWARD AFB IN THE CANAL ZONE, AND FLOWN INTO QUITO APPROXIMATELY EVERY TWO WEEKS BY THE USAF), WITH ATTENDANT FURTHER MORALE PROBLEMS FOR STATE DEPARTMENT AND OTHER CIVILIAN ELEMENTS WHO KNOW THIS, BUT CAN NEITHER PARTICIPATE NOR GET ACCEPTABLE ALTERNATE SERVICE VIA SEA POUCH. IT IS SIGNIFICANT TO NOTE THAT DOD'S COMMENT ON OUR REQUEST FOR RESUMPTION OF FULL APO SERVICE DREW THE FOLLOWING REPLY: "THE DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE CANNOT JUSTIFY THE HIGH COST OF OPERATING A MILITARY POSTAL FACILITY SERVING SUCH A SMALL NUMBER OF DOD PERSONNEL IN RELATION TO NON-DOD PERSONNEL. IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT IF THE PRESENT DEPARTMENT OF STATE POUCH SERVICE IS NOT SATISFACTORY, THE SERVICE BE UP-GRADED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE. THE LIMITATIONS ON THEIR SERVICE CJE SELF-IMPOSED." (USAF COURIER SERVICE TO USDAO QUITO, 8 MARCH 1974).

7. RESUMPTION OF THE TEMPORARILY SUSPENDED APO WOULD BE THE BEST SOLUTION, PARTICULARLY SINCE THE MILITARY ALREADY HAS RESUMED LIMITED APO SERVICE TO ITS PERSONNEL. A SECOND SOLUTION WOULD BE TO TRUCK SURFACE POUCHES TO LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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MIAMI AND THEN AIR FREIGHT THEM TO QUITO/GUAYAQUIL. A THIRD POSSIBLE SOLUTION WOULD BE TO OFF-LOAD THEM IN PANAMA AND FLY THEM TO QUITO BY COMMERCIAL (I.E. BRANIFF) AIR FREIGHT. A FORTH POSSIBILITY WOULD BE TO OFF-LOAD THEM IN PANAMA AND FLY THEM TO QUITO ON THE (MORE OR LESS) FORTNIGHTLY MILITARY SUPPORT FLIGHTS (WHICH BRING IN THE APO MAIL).

8. ACTION REQUESTED: TO RECAP, WE SEE NO SHORT OR EVEN MEDIUM-TERM SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEMS AT THE PORT OF GUAYAQUIL. EVEN THE GOE HAS ACKNOWLEDGED THAT IT IS HELPLESS TO DEAL WITH THE PROBLEM, AND SUGGESTED THAT WE FIND ALTERNATIVE MEANS OF GETTING OUR POUCHES (QUITO 6587, 19 DECEMBER 1973). WE WERE TOLD LAST YEAR THAT AN OMB REVIEW OF THE WORLDWIDE APO PROBLEM

WAS UNDER WAY (FENSTERMACHER TO AMBASSADOR BREWSTER
LETTER OF OCTOBER 10, 1974), AND ARE CURIOUS ABOUT THE
OUTCOME. BUT IN THE MEANTIME, WE ARE LOSING MORE MAIL
THEN WE ARE RECEIVING, SOME OF WHICH THERE IS DIMINISH-
ING HOPE OF EVER FINDING. WE WOULD PREFER THAT ALL
SURFACE POUCH MAIL BE HELD IN WASHINGTON UNTIL A
SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM IS FOUND, RATHER THAN TO
CONTINUE LOSING PERSONAL AND OFFICIAL MATERIAL FOR GOOD
IN THE CHAOTIC PORT OF GUAYAQUIL. PLEASE ADVISE WHEN
SURFACE POUCH SHIPMENTS HAVE BEEN HALTED SO WE CAN
INFORM AFFECTED PERSONNEL.
HEMENWAY

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